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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN OBERSTAR URGES EU TRANSPORT OFFICIALS TO
INCREASE COOPERATION

REF A: BRUSSELS 3422
REF B: LJUBLJANA 208

Summary

¶11. (U) During his May 5-6 visit to Slovenia to meet with EU transport officials during the informal meeting of EU transport ministers, Congressman James Oberstar, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, suggested increased U.S.-EU cooperation to set global standards for aviation safety, air traffic control and road safety. He also applauded the EU for its focus on sustainable transport and outlined U.S. initiatives in transport. Oberstar asserted that reducing traffic congestion, reducing the number of trucks on the road, and reducing vehicle miles traveled on U.S. roads were essential components to increasing economic and reducing greenhouse gases. End Summary.

U.S.-EU Cooperation - Set Global Standards

¶12. (SBU) Slovene Transport Minister and President of the EU Council of Transport Ministers Radovan Zerjav invited Congressman James Oberstar to address EU transport ministers the evening prior to their May 6 informal transport ministerial on sustainable transport. During a meeting on May 5 with Zerjav, EU Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot, and Chair of the European Parliament's Transport Committee Paolo Costa, Oberstar suggested several areas where increased cooperation between the U.S. and the EU could produce results: a coordinated aviation safety initiative, a harmonized air traffic control system, and shared standards of road safety. He reiterated this suggestion in his speech. He proposed to Costa that the transport committees of the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament meet twice a year to discuss transportation issues and share best practices. Costa welcomed this invitation and promised to introduce this proposal to the committee.

Work Through ICAO to Reduce Aviation Emissions

¶13. (SBU) Oberstar opened his address to the transport ministers by expressing concern with a unilateral approach to emissions, such as the proposed emissions trading scheme proposed by the EU (ref A). He stressed that everyone "needs to act but, should act together." He suggested that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the proper forum for dealing with aviation emissions. He said he would like to see aviation and climate change groups work closely together. Separately, Oberstar expressed to Barrot his opposition to foreign ownership of U.S. air carriers and the proposed mergers of U.S. carriers.

Land Transportation - Improve Trains, Reduce Trucks

¶4. (SBU) In the May 5 meeting, Oberstar stressed the need for new strategies to combat the increase in congestion and carbon emissions caused by land transportation. Zerjav and Barrot noted that the trans-European network (ref B), which aims to modernize and increase the development and integration of Europe's highway and rail systems, is Europe's great hope for reducing congestion and increasing transport productivity.

Comment

¶5. (SBU) Oberstar's knowledge of European transit issues and use of statistics throughout his address seemed to make a strong positive impression on many of the EU transport ministers. Several ministers asked Emboff for a copy of Oberstar's dinner speech. The EU ministers appeared pleased with Oberstar's message of collaboration. Oberstar said that he chose not to discuss the controversial aviation issues, in light of the upcoming U.S.-EU Air Transport Agreement Stage II negotiations May 15-16. End Comment.

¶6. (U) Congressman James Oberstar cleared on this cable.

COLEMAN